

Name _____



Date _____

King George III

By Jane Runyon

Did you know that a king gets to be a king just by being born into a certain family? His family is a royal family, and he is part of it. From the time a prince, the young king, is born, he is trained and educated to be the ruler of the country. The family of King George III was the ruling family of England. By the time George was born, the people of England had taken some of the powers away from the ruling family in an uprising called the Glorious Revolution. A group of men, called Parliament, now had the final say in making laws for the government. That didn't mean that the king couldn't make the rules; it was just harder for him to do so. From the time he became king, George tried his hardest to bring more power back to the king and leave less to Parliament.

George was born in 1738, the oldest son of the Prince of Wales. Doctors didn't know it at the time, but he was born with a disease that would eventually make him deaf, blind, and would cause him to lose his mind. The disease worked slowly. All through his life he had times when he couldn't control his temper. He had times when his thinking wasn't normal. There were times when he had to be locked in a room by himself for his own safety. He was not a well man.

Whether it was the disease or just his personality, George didn't like to learn. He was ten years old before he started to learn to read. In his older life, he was smart enough to surround himself with people who would do the things he wanted done. Charles Townshend was one of these men. The two men together were able to get laws passed that would tax the colonists in America.

George became the king of England in 1760, right in the middle of a war the British were having with France. France and England wanted to own all of the land in the new world. When the war was over in 1763, England claimed all of the land from the Atlantic Ocean to the Mississippi River. They let Spain claim all the land from the Mississippi westward. It had cost England a lot of money to get this land for the colonists and protect them against the French, so King George felt that they should pay a large share of that cost. The colonists didn't agree with the taxes King George wanted them to pay. It wasn't so much that they didn't want to help pay their share; they just didn't think it was fair for the king to make all the decisions without giving them some say. When the colonists refused to pay a tax, it made the king mad, and he created a new tax to replace it. This went on for several years until both sides were so mad at each other, they started fighting.

When the colonists accepted the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776, they sent a message to England and the entire world that they were going to start their own country. This had never been done to a king of England before.

King George III

Questions

- _____ 1. How do you get to be a king?
- A. You are born to it.
 - B. You can be elected.
 - C. You can fight for it.
 - D. You can volunteer for the job.
2. True or False George was a good student.

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3. Do you think King George's thinking might have been affected by his illness? Why or why not?

_____ 4. Who were the British at war with when George became king?

- A. the French
- B. the colonists
- C. the Spanish
- D. the Indians

_____ 5. What caused King George to become friendly with Charles Townshend?

- A. He wanted to gain more power for the king and less for Parliament.
- B. He wanted his family to see how much power he had.
- C. He wanted Townshend to be Prime Minister.
- D. He wanted to win the war.

_____ 6. What was the reason the king used for taxing the colonists?

- A. The king said the money had been used to protect the colonists.
- B. The king didn't like them.
- C. The colonists didn't need it.
- D. They had more money than the people in England.

_____ 7. Why did the colonists resist paying the taxes?

- A. They didn't think they had a voice in deciding what should be taxed.
- B. They thought they were being picked on.
- C. They didn't have any money.
- D. They didn't ask to be protected.

8. What conclusion can you draw as to what kind of king George was?

What would it be like to be the king of a country?
